

THE FIFE COUNCIL - COWDENBEATH AREA COMMITTEE – REMOTE MEETING

10th March, 2021

2.02 p.m. – 4.45 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Linda Erskine (Convener), Alistair Bain, Alex Campbell, Gary Guichan, Rosemary Liewald, Mary Lockhart, Lea Mclelland and Darren Watt.

ATTENDING: Gordon Mole, Head of Business and Employability, Peter Corbett, Lead Officer Economy, Economy, Planning and Employability Services; Neil Watson, Lead Consultant (Roads and Lighting Asset Management), John O’Neil, Team Manager - City of Dunfermline, South West Fife & Cowdenbeath, Phil Clarke, Lead Consultant, Traffic Management (South Fife), Allan Maclean, Lead Consultant Sustainable Traffic and Travel, Assets Transportation and Environment, Roads and Transportation Services; Ian Laing, Park Manager (Cowdenbeath), Sarah Roxburgh, Community Manager (Cowdenbeath Area), Communities and Neighbourhood; Ronan Capon, Senior Active School Co-ordinator, Education and Michelle Hyslop, Committee Officer, Legal and Democratic Services.

ALSO ATTENDING: Bailey-Lee Robb, MSYP.

210. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made in terms of Standing Order No. 7.1.

211. MINUTE - MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COWDENBEATH AREA COMMITTEE OF 13TH JANUARY, 2021

The Committee considered the minute of the meeting of the Cowdenbeath Area Committee of 13th January, 2021.

Decision

The Committee agreed to approve the minute.

212. PRESENTATION - ACTIVE SCHOOLS PROJECTS

The Committee considered a presentation by Ronan Capon, Active School Coordinator, relating to Active School Projects.

Decision

The Committee: -

- (1) welcomed and noted the presentation; and
- (2) agreed to continue to promote and support the ongoing active school project.

213./

213. COWDENBEATH AREA ECONOMIC PROFILE (FEBRUARY 2021)

The Committee considered a presentation and report by the Head of Business and Employability providing an annual overview of the local economic profile for the Cowdenbeath Committee Area using the latest available published data.

Decision

The Committee: -

- (1) welcomed and noted the presentation;
- (2) noted the issues raised from the current analysis of available data;
- (3) noted support given to businesses during 2019-2020;
- (4) recognised the ongoing economic impact and uncertainty resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and European exit; and
- (5) agreed to receive further updates on the delivery of Fife Council's Leading Economic Recovery Action Plan in relation to the Cowdenbeath Area.
- (6) agreed to an additional recommendation to include that officers would look at the allocated resources within the Cowdenbeath Area in order to develop and deliver the economic profile within the Cowdenbeath Area.

214. GRASSLANDS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report by the Service Manager, Grounds Maintenance Service detailing the proposed changes to the management of grassland in the area and the outcome of the community consultation and engagement exercise.

Decision

The Committee, acknowledging the analysis of the public consultation and engagement exercise on the changes to the management of grassland, agreed to amend the recommendations in the report to read – where Ward 7 Cowdenbeath and Ward 8 Lochgelly, Cardenden and Benarty alternative grassland proposals are not accepted, areas proposed would revert back to amenity grassland maintenance regimes.

215. AREA ROADS PROGRAMME 2021-22 - DRAFT

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Assets, Transportation and Environment identifying the proposed projects for approval for the Area Roads Programme in the Cowdenbeath area for delivery as part of the 2021-22 financial year.

Decision./

Decision

The Committee: -

- (1) approved the report and appendices 1-3 of the report;
- (2) delegated authority to the Head of Assets, Transportation and Environment to manage the lists of Category 1 and 2 projects, in line with available resources/funding as the programme developed, and in consultation with the Area Convener and Vice Convener; and
- (3) noted appendices 4 - 6 of the report.

216. COWDENBEATH AREA COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Decision

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme for Cowdenbeath Area Committee, which would be updated as appropriate.

217. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Questions were submitted (in terms of Standing Order No 6.1.) by Mr Tom Kinnaird, resident of Benarty.

Question 1

Following on from my earlier question to the Committee at their meeting in October of 2020, the response given as to why the Lochty Burn passing to the south of the new homes at Kirkland Farm, Ballingry could not be fenced off is because a fence would hinder rescue efforts should a young child fall into the burn. Do the individual committee members agree with this answer and does the committee accept the liability which comes from taking this stance should a fatal accident occur?

Response

Councillor Erskine outlined Fife Council's position regarding liability. It was noted that the acceptance of questions would be at the discretion of the Convener and, considering that this question had been asked and answered already, the Convener had the discretion to refuse to accept another question on the same subject. There was also no obligation on individual committee members to provide supplementary answers to questions and no liability would be attached to the committee members in the event of an accident. Councillor Erskine accepted and acknowledged the additional and supplementary question and subsequent additional responses were noted.

A detailed answer was provided to the question at the Cowdenbeath Area Committee meeting on 14th October, 2020 (minute ref. Para. 190 of 2020.CAC.86 referred).

Supplementary./

Supplementary to this previous response, a further response was provided – that Transportation Development Management (South Fife) had requested the erection of a maximum of 4 pedestrian barrier panels at the rear of the footway/cycleway as it crossed the Lochty Burn. The request was made in terms of Condition 1c of the Roads Construction Consent granted to Springfield Properties.

Question 2

The Mary Pit Head at Lochore Meadows Country Park, constructed in 1920, had just passed her centenary without celebration but cordoned off by security fencing due to falling masonry from the structure. As owners, Fife Council has a duty of care for this Scheduled Monument, not least because of her historical and heritage significance to the local area, Fife and Scotland, but also due to the fact that the site is also a grave. Historic Scotland holds funds for the maintenance of assets such as this but for whatever reason, Fife Council have neglected their duty to apply for the costs of works and carry out routine maintenance in order to prevent the structural degradation we are seeing now. Warnings were given years ago but fell on deaf ears. What is the plan now?

Response

Fife Council was not approached at any time, by any organisation, expressing a wish to hold a celebratory event for the centenary of the Mary Pit Head in late 2019 or early 2020. Indeed, the winding gear frame was constructed above the second shaft (No. 2) in 1919 and completed in late 1919, attracting publicity on 9th January, 1920. Notwithstanding that, the safety of the public is paramount, and any number of celebrations had been curtailed or cancelled in 2020 for public safety reasons. Falling masonry would be the sort of public safety crisis which would necessitate the cordoning off of the pit head. Had a celebration been scheduled to coincide with the actual anniversary and prior to June 2020 the Pit Head would have been intact and no fencing was in place.

Fife Council are the current custodians of the Pit Head and whilst owners of scheduled monuments have no duty to maintain or improve management of their sites we are aware of the significance of the monument and have liaised with Historic Environment Scotland (HES) from the day that the masonry fell and in the weeks following. A bid to HES for financial assistance to effect repairs to the monument was turned down in December, 2020 on the basis that - 'Your expression of interest highlights that work is required to explore the extent of the damage to the structure whereas our Historic Environment Repair Grant supports the delivery of repair works rather than investigations into the extent of repairs required. We would expect all investigations to have been completed at the point of application in order to inform the proposals and provide estimated costs for the repairs.' We, therefore, must await the end of the lockdown period before we engage in the next step in the process.' This process commenced in June 2020 and, largely because of the global pandemic, progress in identifying a solution had not been as fast as desired.

Given./

Given that the process to repair 'concrete cancer' requires a full investigation to assess the extremities of the weakness, the removal of all cracked concrete, the cutting away or sandblasting of the exposed metal frame, the installation of replacement steel, the replacement of the concrete and a sealant, which is a specialised job involving scaffolding and an item of expenditure easily approaching c £200,000, all during a pandemic it may be premature to suggest that someone has neglected their duty between June and January.

It is emotive to suggest the site of the Pit Head is a grave. The shaft and the mine workings undeniably bore witness to a large number of very tragic accidents and deaths, but thanks , on many occasions at great personal risk to their extremely brave fellow workers, all of the dead and injured were brought to the surface. No single instance where the dead were abandoned below ground can be found.

Decision

The Committee: -

- (1) noted the questions submitted by Mr Tom Kinnaird and the respective response; and
- (2) noted that costs be obtained to get an engineering survey completed for repair works to the Mary Pit Head monument.